

Exhibit 18

Tennessee moves to the forefront with anti-transgender laws

By JONATHAN MATTISE, KIMBERLEE KRUESI and LINDSAY WHITEHURST May 23, 2021



NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Conservative lawmakers nationwide introduced a flurry of anti-LGBTQ bills this year, but no state's political leaders have gone further than Tennessee in enacting new laws targeting transgender people.

Lawmakers passed and Republican Gov. Bill Lee signed five new bills into law, consistently dismissing concerns that they discriminate against an already vulnerable population, that some of the laws are unworkable and that they could damage the state's reputation.

Supporters defend the laws policy by policy, arguing that one protects parental rights, others protect girls and women and one even improves equality. Opponents reject those claims.

Colin Goodbred, a 22-year-old transgender student raised in the Nashville suburbs who attends college in New Hampshire, says the bevy of new laws could keep him

Case 3:21-cv-00490 Document 37-19 Filed 01/31/22 Page 2 of 5 PageID #: 726

from ever calling Tennessee home again.

"I think that these sorts of bills are part of what is pushing me away from identifying Tennessee as my own state, even though I spent the vast majority of my childhood, I grew up, in Tennessee," said Goodbred, a Dartmouth College senior. "I don't feel like I want to return there. I'm already going to college out of state. I'm wanting to work out of state. And they've made it abundantly clear that they do not want trans people in the state."

Tennessee's emergence as an anti-LGBTQ leader grows out of a rightward political shift in a state Republicans already firmly controlled. Lee's Republican predecessor tapped the brakes on some socially conservative legislation, but emphatic GOP election wins fueled by strong support for former President Donald Trump have emboldened lawmakers since then. That's the political landscape in which Lee is launching his 2022 reelection bid.

Legislatures in 30 other states, most of them Republican-controlled, have considered banning trans youth from sports teams that align with their gender identity. Twenty have weighed bans on gender-confirming medical care for transgender minors. The Human Rights Campaign has called 2021 the worst year for anti-LGBTQ legislation in recent history.

Tennessee this year [banned transgender athletes](#) from playing girls public high school or middle school sports. The state is poised [to become the first](#) to require government buildings and businesses that are open to the public to post signs if they let trans people use multi-person bathrooms and other facilities associated with their gender identity.

Public schools, meanwhile, will soon [risk losing lawsuits](#) if they let transgender students or employees use multi-person bathrooms or locker rooms that do not reflect their sex at birth. Lee also signed legislation to require [school districts to alert parents](#) 30 days before students are taught about sexual orientation or gender identity, letting them opt out of the lesson.

"Tennessee is taking the crown for the state of hate," said Sasha Buchert, a Lambda Legal senior attorney.

The governor recently defended the school-bathroom rule. "That bill provides equal access to every student," he said.

Neighboring [Arkansas](#) is the only other state to ban gender-confirming care for minors, one of three new anti-transgender laws there. Montana has two new legal restrictions for transgender people. Sports bans have also passed in a handful of other states, including Alabama, Mississippi and West Virginia.

The decadeslong culture war over LGBTQ rights has focused on transgender Americans in recent years and has increasingly been a topic of discussion on conservative-leaning news outlets.

The recent wave of bills has had support from conservative groups including the Heritage Foundation and the Alliance Defending Freedom, with the latter offering model legislation for transgender athletics bills. The push in statehouses follows Democratic President Joe Biden's executive order prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity.

A survey by The Trevor Project [showed](#) 94% of LGBTQ youth said recent political debates over the issue had negatively affected their mental health. A separate question found more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.

The Trevor Project has been contacted by Tennessee youths in crisis 2,400 times over the past year, according to Executive Director Amit Paley.

"Our son asks regularly, 'When can we move, or can you send me to boarding school?'" said Amy Allen, whose 8th grade transgender son is dreading changing from private to public school next fall.

Nashville's mayor warned that the business signage requirement for bathrooms and other facilities could be particularly detrimental for his growing, progressive-leaning city, which is often at odds with social policies coming from the GOP-dominated Capitol downtown.

"This law is part of an anti-LGBT political platform of hate and division," said Mayor John Cooper, a Democrat. "One of the risks for Nashville is that the hostility inherent to these signs can be the equivalent of hanging up another sign: a 'Do not come here' sign. We are an inclusive city, and that won't change."

Some of Tennessee's new laws face practical challenges.

The signage bill's sponsor said people could file lawsuits or district attorneys could ask a judge to force businesses to comply. But Tennessee District Attorneys General

[Case 3:21-cv-00490 Document 37-19 Filed 01/31/22 Page 4 of 5 PageID #: 728](#)

Conference President Amy Weirich says the bill “doesn’t speak to anything having to do with enforcement,” so her group remained neutral on the bill.

“The way it’s written, I don’t see anything that allows or provides me the responsibility or right to go to civil court and ask a judge to enforce it,” said Weirich, Shelby County’s district attorney.

Regarding the medical treatment ban, advocates say no doctor in Tennessee currently provides youth hormone therapy before puberty.

Supporters of sports-team bans have [largely been unable to cite local](#) cases — in Tennessee or nationwide — where trans athletes were seen to have a competitive advantage. They argue that the rules will ensure a level playing field.

The new laws send a bad signal, said Aly Chapman, mother of a transgender son and advocate.

“I don’t know how to see it any other way than it’s about oppression, control and power and telling people, ‘You do not exist,’” she said.

Advocates say the next few years will be critical. Many fear the barrage of legislation may continue.

“The signaling is, ‘Hey, look at what we’ve been able to do. Here’s the road map,’” Chapman said. “They’re not done.”

Whitehurst reported from Salt Lake City, Utah.